

# Benefits of Play Therapy

Hartwig, E., & Bennett, M. (2017). Four approaches to using sandtray in play therapy supervision. *International Journal of Play Therapy*. Vol. 26 (4), 230-238. Retrieved from: <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.memphis.edu/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=e719ea73-3a7a-4c48-b434-bc51b01c0401%40sessionmgr101>

**Texas State University** released a study on *four approaches to using sandtray in play therapy supervision* and how use of a Sandtray can be used as an intervention with clients and in a supervisory relationship to help professionals engage in positive supervision sessions which can be translated to play therapy sessions with clients. On a client level, Sandtray as an intervention can help to foster nonverbal expressions, create a more effective relationship between a client and a therapist, and promote introspection. On a supervisory level, Sandtray helps a supervisee learn how to open up to their supervisors on cases and provides a platform for the supervisee to present a case while processing through the case themselves.

Sandtray in a play therapy setting was shown in this study to be effective when introduced as an intervention for use with clients and in a supervisory setting. Play therapists in supervision are able to practice Sandtray interventions on themselves and learn the effectiveness, which is then translated back into the therapeutic relationship with the client when Sandtray is able to be conducted properly.

Willis, A., Haslam, D., & Bermudez, J. (2016). Harnessing the power of play in emotionally focused family therapy with preschool children. *The Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*. Vol. 42 (4). Retrieved from: <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.memphis.edu/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=d2d0143d-1a54-4825-9965-9e43173b99df%40sessionmgr4010>

**The Journal of Marital and Family Therapy** published a study on *harnessing the power of play in emotionally focused family therapy with preschool children*. This study focused on combination of Emotionally Focused Family Therapy (EFFT) with play therapy on a family level and how play therapy can be versatile enough to be combined with other evidence based approaches to foster greater child-parent participation. This article touched on how in traditional family therapy approaches, children speak less than parents which can deter the formation of a cohesive therapeutic relationship between the whole family and the therapist. Using family therapy has been shown to increase child participation in the therapy session, a better working alliance between therapist and family, and more positive feeling outcomes from the family as a whole. This approach to family therapy also focuses on the theory of attachment, focusing on how children learn a large amount of their emotional regulation from interactions with parents.

Findings and case studies from this article show that family therapy can benefit from play therapy especially when young children are in the mix. This study provides options for family therapists to incorporate play therapy interventions into sessions with young children to foster a greater sense of family participation and communication while using techniques that allow young children to participate more. This study also outlines the requirements that children must meet in order for the play therapy to be effective, which helps define the structure for this type of therapy to increase its effectiveness with children and families.

Jensen, S. A., Biesen, J. N., & Graham, E. R. (2017). A meta-analytic review of play therapy with emphasis on outcome measures. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 48(5), 390-400.

**The American Psychological Association** published a *meta-analytical review play therapy with emphasis on outcome measures*. 100 studies involving play therapy were assessed for overall effectiveness of the intervention, with a significant moderate effect of effectiveness for play therapy as an intervention. Play therapy studies were found to have small to moderate effects on individuals in the study,

however a need for greater quality in studies especially in size and strength. However, there were findings on the significance of play therapy in relation to family relationships, and that this was the largest effect finding which gives credibility to play therapy's ability to help strengthen and mend family relationships. This analysis highlights a need for additional research on play therapy to have greater data and findings, but shows that play therapy does have an effect on the outcomes of participants on a variety of levels.

Palmer, E., Pratt, K., & Goodway, J. (2017). A review of play therapy interventions for chronic illness: applications to childhood obesity prevention and treatment. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, Vol. 26 (3), 125-137. Retrieved from: <https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/features/pla-pla0000045.pdf>

**The Ohio State University** released a study that looks at *play therapy interventions for chronic illness and applications to childhood obesity prevention and treatment*. Childhood chronic illnesses, such as obesity, affect both a child and their family systems, and with over 17% of children ages 2-19 in the United States diagnosed with obesity effective interventions are needed to prevent current and future medical complications among. This review analyzed 6 articles on various types of play therapy utilized in health care settings, and found themes on family system enhancement, child psychological outcomes, and behavior changes in child and parents' health.

This review found positive outcomes for family system enhancement, such as decreased parental stress and increased acceptance of their child. Child psychological review found internalized and externalized behaviors of children diagnosed with obesity, and found a need for additional research that looks at how social stigmas and children's peers can affect their psychological well-being and how play therapy can address these social issues. The third theme found that a cohesive health care team integrating in family experiences and the parent-child satisfaction. The long term conclusions from this review show that play therapy can be effective for helping children with chronic illnesses and their families in a developmentally appropriate, cost-effective, and family-centered intervention method.

Olsen-Morrison, D. (2017). Integrative play therapy with adults with complex trauma: a developmentally-informed approach. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, Vol. 26 (3), 172-183. Retrieved from: <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.memphis.edu/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=c505d4d9-2d94-447c-819e-af417c36f70c%40sessionmgr102>

**Park University** released a study on *integrative play therapy with adults with complex trauma: a developmentally informed approach* and recognizes the affects that play therapy can have in an unconventional way for adults. Play therapy already is established as a recognizable intervention for traumatized children, and this case study shows how this technique can be implemented into practice with adults suffering from complex traumas to help individuals work through their trauma and healing psychological injuries which can occur from prolonged untreated trauma. This study reviews literature on play therapy and trauma treatment, and focuses on creative an integrative, neuroscience-based systems approach addressing children and adults on a whole body-mind-soul picture. Studies and theoretical models show that play therapy for adults traumatized as children can help adults to regain a sense of self and heal emotional and social developmental issues that resulted from childhood trauma.

This study looked at how adults with complex trauma may shy away from direct, talk-based therapies and how a nondirective play therapy approach may be more affective when engaging non-traditional clients. Play therapy in adults can help to create safety, stabilization and regulation of emotions, and to work through the trauma process in a way that is beneficial and therapeutic without retraumatizing an individual who is unable to verbally discuss their trauma.